

HAPPINESS FOR TEACHER-TRAINEES: POSITIVE EDUCATION IMPLICATIONS FOR 21ST CENTURY TEACHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

Education system in India primarily focuses on the learner's academic achievement to secure a job and to achieve materialistic goals. Hence, it has disregarded the importance of happiness and wellbeing for an individual to lead a good life in an absolute sense. Happiness can be defined as the ultimate goal of the entire better for human existence. Although, there is a big sect in our country who is not happy or going through some mental health problems as the UN World Happiness (2021) survey conducted by United Nations', has placed India at a dismal position for the low subjective wellbeing and happiness of its natives. Research in Education has revealed that teachers can play a vital role as an influencing force for inculcating optimism, trust, and happiness in their pupils. Positive Psychology (PP) and an educational intervention called Positive Education (PE) based on its principles is the manoeuvre that can equip the teachers with this huge responsibility. PE as an educational intervention works on developing a happy, optimistic, creative self in an academic setting with the execution of positive psychology tenets, methods and techniques. However, to achieve the goals mentioned above uniformly throughout the nation, policymakers need to include PE as a mandatory part of the teacher education curriculum so that the teacher trainees study, experience and develop skills to deal with the problems concerned with the subjective wellbeing and mental health issues in their classroom. India has initiated its battle against poor mental health by launching 'Happiness Curriculum' in different states. Universities have also started the inclusion of PE in their teacher education curriculum.

Keywords: Happiness, Education, Positive Psychology, Positive Education, Initiatives



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Introduction

What is Happiness?

"Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony."- Mahatma Gandhi.

In general, happiness is the ultimate goal of human existence but, it connotes different meanings to different people. However, in the comprehensive view, happiness consists of all the goodness. Considering that meaning, it may become synonymous with the terms like well-being or quality of life and denoted both individual and social welfare (Veenhoven, 2012). Moving away from the common notion of the concept of happiness to a more precise denotation in the realm of psychology, happiness may be stated as the emotional wellbeing that a person experiences in their day-to-day life or, more broadly, as a positive evaluation of one's life and accomplishments overall—that is, subjective wellbeing. Happiness is one of the essential emotions in human life, effectively guiding them toward a productive, flourishing, healthy and creative self. In almost every society and culture, the concept of happiness, which is considered the aim of life, includes concepts such as "life satisfaction", "being healthy", "flow", "subjective wellbeing", "optimism", and "positive emotions", and sometimes they are used interchangeably (Diener et al., 2003; Eryilmaz, 2012).

What Is Positive Education or Happiness Education?

"The fundamental goal of positive education is to promote flourishing or positive mental health within the school community". (Norrish, Williams, O'Connor, & Robinson, 2013)

The role of teachers as an influencing factor in inculcating the personalities of the learner with optimism, trust, and happiness has utmost importance. Various studies indicated that teachers have an important role in raising happy individuals in the education system (Shoshani and Steinmetz, 2013). Therefore, thrust is being given to such educational programs and interventions that improve the optimism and happiness of the students and which are based on the guiding hypothesis of Positive Education (PE) which stated that positive schools and positive teachers are the fulcrum for producing more wellbeing in a culture. Positive education is the result of Positive Psychology (PP) which emerged as a protest against clinical psychology where the focus is on correcting the negative and suppressive feelings one possesses. Positive psychology aims at the positive facets instead of

the negatives; it functions to foster an individual's constructive and optimistic traits. Sheldon and King (2001) referred PE as a scientific study of ordinary people's strengths and virtues" or positivity developing since human nature cannot be accounted for with a complete problem-focused frame of reference. Positive psychology believes that positive emotion and positive traits develop better in the environment of positive institutions (Duckworth et al., 2005)

Martin Seligman, the pioneer of Positive Psychology, has mentioned PE as "education for both traditional skills and for happiness" (Seligman et al., 2009) or "applied positive psychology in education" (Green et al., 2011). Hence to put it in definition, we can say that PE is an educational intervention that works on the development of wellbeing and happiness in students and all the concerned personnel in a pedagogical setting.

Need for Positive Psychology or Positive Education

The realization of the significance of the contemplation on the topics like mental health and depression are being considered around the globe. However, our education system is aimed primarily at academic achievement to secure a job and to achieve materialistic goals, while invalidating subjective wellbeing to lead a good life in the real sense. The world is becoming a complex space with drastic changes in relationships, expanding boundaries, and excessive technological usage, which has led to anxious and stressed minds causing severe mental diseases. Even today the mental diseases are seen as a taboo in our country, and the cruciality of subjective wellbeing has been neglected in all walks of social life. The alarming situation emerges for our nation when in a recent UN World Happiness Report (2021), which surveyed 149 countries, ranking their national happiness based on the subjective wellbeing of the citizens; in which India's rank has consistently been declining and reached to dismal 136th position.

Happiness is not just a personal sentiment anymore but has already become a signifying key factor of a nation's actual growth and development; furthermore, happiness at present is an essential part of the global policy agenda. Now, it is increasingly becoming a stated policy goal of world governments, with the Gross National Happiness (GNH) of the country rather than its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as the primary quantity to be maximized (Stiglitz, Sen, & Fitoussi, 2009). While identifying the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) indicator as incapable of adequately representing the happiness and wellbeing of

people, the United Nations General Assembly (2011), in its resolution 65/309 entitled "Happiness: towards a holistic approach to development", recognized the pursuit of happiness as a fundamental human goal. The concern and emphasis on the prominence of happiness have emerged due to the massive rise in the prevalence of mental illnesses and disorders that affect every facet of individual and social existence; around 31% of the world's population comes under the age of eighteen, whereas 10% of them have diagnosable mental health problems (WHO, 2003; Kieling et al. 2011). Moreover, studies showing how factors like family, teachers and relationships with the environment affect children's happiness put more responsibility on parents, caregivers and teachers (Uusitalo-Malvimaara and Lehto, 2012). According to the World Happiness Report (2015), the well-being of pupils should be an explicit objective of every school.

Recent Initiatives in India in the field of Positive or Happiness Education

Specific initiatives are taken by the few states in India in the field Positive Education to grip the ever-increasing mental health problems that were discounted for quite a long time. Some significant steps in the concerned fields are mentioned below:

The transforming step in the field of positive education was first taken by the Delhi Government when it introduced the Happiness curriculum (HC) in the year 2018. The Happiness Curriculum is a much-needed initiative taken to improve the students' mental wellbeing. The Government of Delhi is the first to launch this educational program for grades one to eight in Government Schools of Delhi with the objective to develop self-awareness, mindfulness, social awareness, human values, critical thinking, life skills, problem-solving, effective communication skills and relationship building (Happiness Curriculum, 2019). It was brought with a vision to strengthen the foundations of happiness and wellbeing of all students through a 35-minute class conducted daily across 1,030 government schools in the national capital. The concept of the "Happiness Triad" proposed by philosopher Agrahar Nagraj Sarman played a significant role in envisaging and creating the framework and subject matter of the Happiness Curriculum (Happiness Curriculum, 2019).

There are different state governments which have followed the footprint of Delhi and adapted the model of Happiness Curriculum in which second stands the Chattisgarh and third Uttar Pradesh Government which decided to launch the 'Happiness Curriculum' in 150

primary schools of Uttar Pradesh under a pilot project to make the students more sensitive towards nature and society.

Following the example of Delhi, Uttarakhand has become the third state to initiate Happiness Curriculum titled 'Anandam Curriculum' in grades first to eight in all the government schools since April 2019. Anandam Curriculum is an adaptation of the Delhi Happiness Curriculum Framework with some trivial changes (in the names of places and characters in the stories as per the State's cultural heritage) in Happiness Curriculum manuals for teachers. The purpose and objectives of the Anandam Curriculum remain the same as of the Happiness Curriculum Delhi. District Institute of Education and Training (DIETs) training coordinators completed their Delhi training. Also, they modified the teachers' manuals considering the state's distinctive features and local essence so that students could relate more to Anandam Curriculum. District Coordinators provided regular training for teachers to implement the Anandam Curriculum effectively and efficiently in all government schools in 95 blocks of the state. The Anandam Curriculum was intended to be implemented in the classrooms by April 2020. However, due to shutdowns of the schools during the Corona pandemic, district coordinators started virtual training for the teachers to reinforce their understanding and learning of Anandam Curriculum.

Teacher Education

A learner's quality of education and achievements is positively correlated with the competence and eminence of the teacher with whom they interact. This indicates that to fulfill the quality workforce requisite of the State, we need well-trained and educated teachers to take up such a sensitive and momentous task of teaching. Teacher education is not meant only for the fresh candidates who are aspiring teachers, but it is a requirement for the ones who have spent their decades in this profession to revitalize them with the ever-changing world. *The National Council for Teacher Education has defined teacher education as – “A programme of education, research and training of persons to teach from pre-primary to higher education level. Teacher education is a programme that is related to the development of teacher proficiency and competence that would enable and empower the teacher to meet the requirements of the profession and face the challenges therein”.* Teachers are pivotal in an educational setting as they are primarily held accountable for implementing the

educational programs and interventions to achieve the desired outcomes. Therefore in the past few decades, the emphasis on the preparation of teachers has amplified.

Teaching is a profession of professions, as the sole responsibility of creating all the human resource required by a society lie on the teachers and education system, the preparation of desirable teachers for this immense commitment is a significant task for any nation around the globe; hence all the watches remain on the teacher education institutions where, the future teachers are prepared. Teacher trainees are the prospective teachers who will be, sooner or later, in the schools and colleges teaching and training the young, creative, talented thinkers of tomorrow. In this process, teacher trainees occupy the pivotal position as they become the predicates of future teachers' attitudes, characteristics and skills.

Happiness Curriculum: Implications for Teacher Education

Pupil-teachers are getting acquainted with the latest technologies used in the field of education as it is the need of the hour; in the same way, they have to get equipped with the methods, strategies and tactics to nurture the optimistic, happy and creative minds in their classrooms. Certain implications of Happiness Curriculum for teacher-education are listed below:

Emphasis on Pre-Service Training: National Capital Delhi & States of Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh & Uttar Pradesh has made provisions for in-service teachers training to effectively implement the new interventions in schools like Happiness Curriculum. However, the leading target group for positive education training should be the pre-service trainees who must be well prepared with the principles and technicalities of positive education before entering their prospects classrooms and schools.

A Uniform model of Positive Education: A Uniformed Happiness Curriculum and their Manuals should be an integral part of teacher training courses, i.e., during D.El.Ed., B.Ed. M.Ed. and other courses of similar nature to sensitize the teacher trainees at an early stage about the relevance of subjective wellbeing and make them skilled in handling with the PE techniques and strategies in their everyday interaction in the classrooms, playground, co-curricular or extra-curricular activities.

PERMA Model of Positive Education: PE is based on traditional education principles studying happiness and wellbeing. Seligman in 2011 introduced a PERMA model based on

Positive Psychology principles to reduce depression in students and enhance their wellbeing and happiness. PERMA Model aimed to promote positive mental health among students and teachers, encompassing five main essentials components considered to be critical for long-term wellbeing and happiness:

- Positive Emotions: Feeling positive emotions such as joy, gratitude, interest, and hope
- Engagement: Being fully absorbed in activities that use your skills but still challenge you
- (Positive) Relationships: Having positive relationships
- Meaning: Belonging to and serving something you believe is more significant than yourself
- Accomplishment: Pursuing success, winning, achievement, and mastery (Moore, 2020).

There is an extension of this model, i.e. The PERMAH framework, which also adds health to this, covering aspects such as sleep, exercise, and diet as part of a robust positive education program (Norris & Seligman, 2015).

Equipping teacher trainees with Positive Psychology: As learners' psychology is an integral part of the teacher education curriculum, in the same way the teacher-trainees must be equipped with the concept of positive psychology, which is an emerging discipline and also keep the utmost relevance to the contemporary issues of mental health. The teacher education courses should be embedded with PP in a uniform manner around the nation.

Happiness classes as an integral part of the internship program: Provision of certain Happiness classes with the traditional classes during the school's internship period can allow the teacher trainees to get their learning into action. The teacher trainee must be able to utilize the learning of positive psychology and happiness efficiently to the real classroom and school situations.

The Environment of Teacher Education Institutions: Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) can play a crucial role in providing the first-hand experience of Positive Education by adapting PE models to provide an environment which considers the significance of the subjective-wellbeing of the teacher trainees. The pupil-teachers often consist of diverse demographics carrying out the rigorous course work, community services, internships and

various assessments as the essential requirements for the fulfillment of various teacher training courses; hence TEIs need to be concerned about their mental health.

Sessions with Mental Health Experts: The TEIs should organize conference, seminars, invited lectures with the provisions of interactive sessions wherein the specialist from the fields of positive psychology would address the issues pertaining to the mental health and healthier relationships. This would certainly help the teacher trainees to understand the subject's gravity and consider the relevance of mental health for the young brains in the classrooms.

Inclusion of activities and their in-depth knowledge: The co-curricular activities including Scout and Guide, Sports and other relevant activities should be an integral part of teacher-education programmes. Also, the teacher trainees should know the significance and objectives behind these co-scholastic activities and understand the need to incorporate them into their teaching-learning process.

Promoting Happiness & Joyful Learning: Program Anandam for Teacher Trainees

Kumaun University, Nainital incorporated Happiness, 'Joyful Learning: Program Anandam' in the University B.Ed. Syllabus in the year 2020, keeping the principles of Anandam Curriculum. The PE Intervention is included in the fourth semester where, the assessment is completely internal and the programme is intended to develop the art of practicing happiness, making the teaching-learning a joyful experience, acquaint pupil-teachers with the skills to keep the atmosphere of classrooms stress-free and happy, develop emotional stability, a sense of self-reliance, skills of creative expression etc. The program Anandam, its learning material and related manual constitute a guide for conducting this Enhancing Professional Competencies (EPC) course. The teacher trainees in the course undergo various interacting workshop like, Story-telling, Games /Sports, Yoga, Music, Dance, Theatre, Drama, Street-plays, Fine arts for evolving the PE proficiencies among the trainees teachers. The programmes is also having a provision of suitable interaction with the Faculty of DIET who have undergone training in Program Anandam and supervising activities organized under this course. The Program Anandam is running in all the affiliated colleges of the University.

Conclusion

Happiness is the sole attribute of the existence of human beings; we need happy and content individuals in every sphere of life to build an optimistic and strong world. In

contemporary times we see the deteriorating level of happiness and increment in the number of mental diseases and depression. Flourishing the subjective wellbeing, interventions under the newly developed discipline of positive psychology can be a really helpful approach. The Happiness Curriculum must be integrated in Teacher Education programme at all levels in the country and efforts need to be done in this direction as this would positively results in the better mental health and the overall development of the personality of the prospective teachers, students and citizens of the nation.

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